



LIBERTY FOR ALL?

(What connection do you think the following illustration has with the Bible texts on the other page?)

India Tracy was a straight-A high school student in Tennessee, U.S.A. Her family was Pagan—they practiced a modern version of an ancient nature-worshiping religion. India got in trouble with teachers and administration at her public school for refusing to attend a Christian tent revival that was held during school hours and for refusing to play Mary in a school Christmas play. When India wrote a class paper on religious freedom, a teacher told her to “keep quiet or you’ll get in trouble.” Other students beat her up and picked on her, including three boys who chased her down the hall, grabbed her by the back of the neck, and told her to “change your religion or we’ll change it for you.” She was called a “Satan-worshiper,” a lesbian, and accused of eating babies, because she wasn’t a Christian.

Meanwhile, in the African country of Eritrea, 60 teenagers who were required to attend a military training camp were arrested when military commanders searched their belongings and discovered they were carrying Bibles. The students were punished by being placed in metal shipping containers with no light, extreme heat, and limited air and food.

Discrimination against people because of their religious beliefs can be minor, serious, or even life-threatening. It can happen across the world or here at home. It can happen to people who believe in the same things we do, or people we totally disagree with.

“Tolerance” is an important word in society today. How can we be tolerant of other people’s beliefs if we disagree with them? Do pagan teenagers like India Tracy deserve the same religious freedom that we want for ourselves and our fellow Christians in Eritrea?



Key Text: Choose one of the texts from Wednesday’s portion of the lesson. Write it here and memorize it this week.

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Sunday HERE’S WHAT I THINK

>> Christians want the freedom to pray, talk about their religion, and worship God openly. Meanwhile, non-Christians want the freedom to talk openly about their religion and not have Christianity “pushed” on them. Read the stories of India Tracy and the Eritrean students in the illustration “Liberty for All?” What is similar about all the characters in the story? Does tolerance mean accepting everyone’s beliefs, even if they’re different from yours? If you tell a non-Christian about Jesus, are you being intolerant? Where do we draw the line?

>> Log on to www.guidemagazine.org/rtf to post your responses. Be upfront and honest. Say what you think.

Monday WHAT ARE THEY TRYING TO SAY?

Different people, different opinions. Some of the quotations below represent the views of true kingdom citizens; others may not. Can you tell the difference? How do these statements compare with what God is saying in His Word? After reviewing the texts in the God Says . . . portion of the lesson, write a statement that captures your belief. Be prepared to quote yourself at Sabbath School.

>> “There is a sense in which the world needs broad-mindedness and tolerance; and certainly we all need understanding and charity. However, in the realm of intolerance we are too broad-minded in certain areas. In some things Christ was the most tolerant, broad-minded Man that ever lived, but in other things He was one of the most intolerant of men.”

—Billy Graham, current U.S. evangelist.

>> “Perhaps it’s the greatest of all human vanities to assume that one’s religion is the only way to Deity.”—Scott Cunningham, current U.S. Wiccan writer.

>> “Just as many rivers lead to the sea, there are many paths to God.”
—Joan Borysenko, current U.S. writer.

>> “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”—Jesus (John 14:6, NIV).

>> “Persecution was at least a sign of personal interest. Tolerance is composed of nine parts of apathy to one of brotherly love.”—Frank Moore Colby, 19th-century U.S. editor and writer.

>> “Of all religions, Christianity is without a doubt the one that should inspire tolerance most, although, up to now, the Christians have been the most intolerant of all men.”—Francois Marie Arouet Voltaire, 18th-century French philosopher and writer.

Write your own quotation.
What I say is . . .

>>

3

Tuesday
SO WHAT?

- >> As we noted in last week’s lesson, we’re surrounded by more different beliefs and attitudes today than ever before. Most people no longer accept “Because the Bible says so” as a good-enough answer. How does a Christian young person respond to the “rainbow” of different religious beliefs in the world around us? Is it our job to convince others that we’re right? Do we simply “agree to disagree”? Can we show tolerance and respect for people’s beliefs and share Jesus with them at the same time?
- >> Tough questions. Even experienced Christian adults still struggle with these things. It’s not easy to strike the perfect balance between respecting other people’s beliefs and standing firmly on your own. As God’s kingdom agents in this world, how do we infiltrate society without offending people, turning them off, or being disrespectful? We have a fine line to walk. Jesus calls us to be fearless and bold in standing for Him, yet to always treat others the way we would want to be treated. That means respecting other people’s right to their beliefs just as we want our own rights to be respected.

5

Thursday
WHAT DOES THIS
HAVE TO DO WITH ME?

- >> If you’ve had any contact at all with non-Christians (or even with other Christians outside your own church) then you know that some people think that it’s very narrow-minded and intolerant to believe you have “the truth” about God and about how we should live. But for Seventh-day Adventists, “The Truth” has always been an important way of expressing what we believe.
- >> In a world that says “there are many different truths for different people,” can you believe in “The Truth” anymore? Seventh-day Adventist Christians say Yes! But in a world with more diversity, more different views and opinions than ever before, we have to think carefully about how to share that Truth.
- >> Forcing your views on people never works. Most of the time it only makes them angry and hostile towards what you’re trying to say. Shutting people down and saying they don’t have a right to their own beliefs is unfair and un-Christlike. While we have to stand firm on what we believe, we also have to respect and love others whose beliefs are different.
- >> In fact, love is the key here. Bible doctrines have their place, but the best way to share Jesus in the world we live in today is to live His love in everything we do. When people see our love in action, they’ll be ready to hear our message of God’s love.

4

Wednesday
GOD SAYS . . .

- >> **Acts 4:12 (CEV)**
“Only Jesus has the power to save! His name is the only one in all the world that can save anyone.”
- >> **John 14:6 (CEV)**
“‘I am the way, the truth, and the life!’ Jesus answered. ‘Without me, no one can go to the Father.’”
- >> **Romans 12:18 (CEV)**
“Do your best to live at peace with everyone.”
- >> **Matthew 28:19, 20 (CEV)**
“Go to the people of all nations and make them my disciples. Baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to do everything I have told you. I will be with you always, even until the end of the world.”
- >> **1 Peter 2:12 (NIV)**
“Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.”
- >> **Ephesians 4:4-6 (CEV)**
“All of you are part of the same body. There is only one Spirit of God, just as you were given one hope when you were chosen to be God’s people. We have only one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. There is one God who is the Father of all people.”
- >> **John 17:13-18 (CEV)**
“I say these things while I am still in the world, so that my followers will have the same complete joy that I do. I have told them your message. But the people of this world hate them, because they don’t belong to this world, just as I don’t. Father, I don’t ask you to take my followers out of the world, but keep them safe from the evil one. They don’t belong to this world, and neither do I. . . . I am sending them into the world, just as you sent me.”

6

Friday
HOW DOES IT WORK?

- >> Interview three to five friends whom you know have a different religious background or outlook than you do. Ask them:
 1. Do you believe in a God?
 2. If so, what do you think God is like?
 3. What do you think happens to people after they die?
 4. How should people decide what’s right or wrong to do?
 5. What’s the ultimate point of life?
- >> Make notes of their answers. Then look back over their answers and think about how their views differ from yours. What could you say about your belief in Jesus that would be meaningful to each of these people? Pray for your friends and ask God to touch their lives in a way that they can relate to.



ILLUS.: TERRY CREWS